

FAITHFUL SCIENCE

AVOIDING SLOPPY THINKING FROM THE LAB TO THE PEW

OCTOBER 6
8:30PM
MSC 2406



PROF.
MICAH
GREEN

Do Science & Christianity Conflict?

What are some ways you have been told that science and Christianity are in conflict?

Two ways this can happen:

1. Apparent conflict on specific claims of science or history
2. Big picture disagreements like “Miracles are impossible”

#1: Apparent Conflict on Specific Scientific Questions



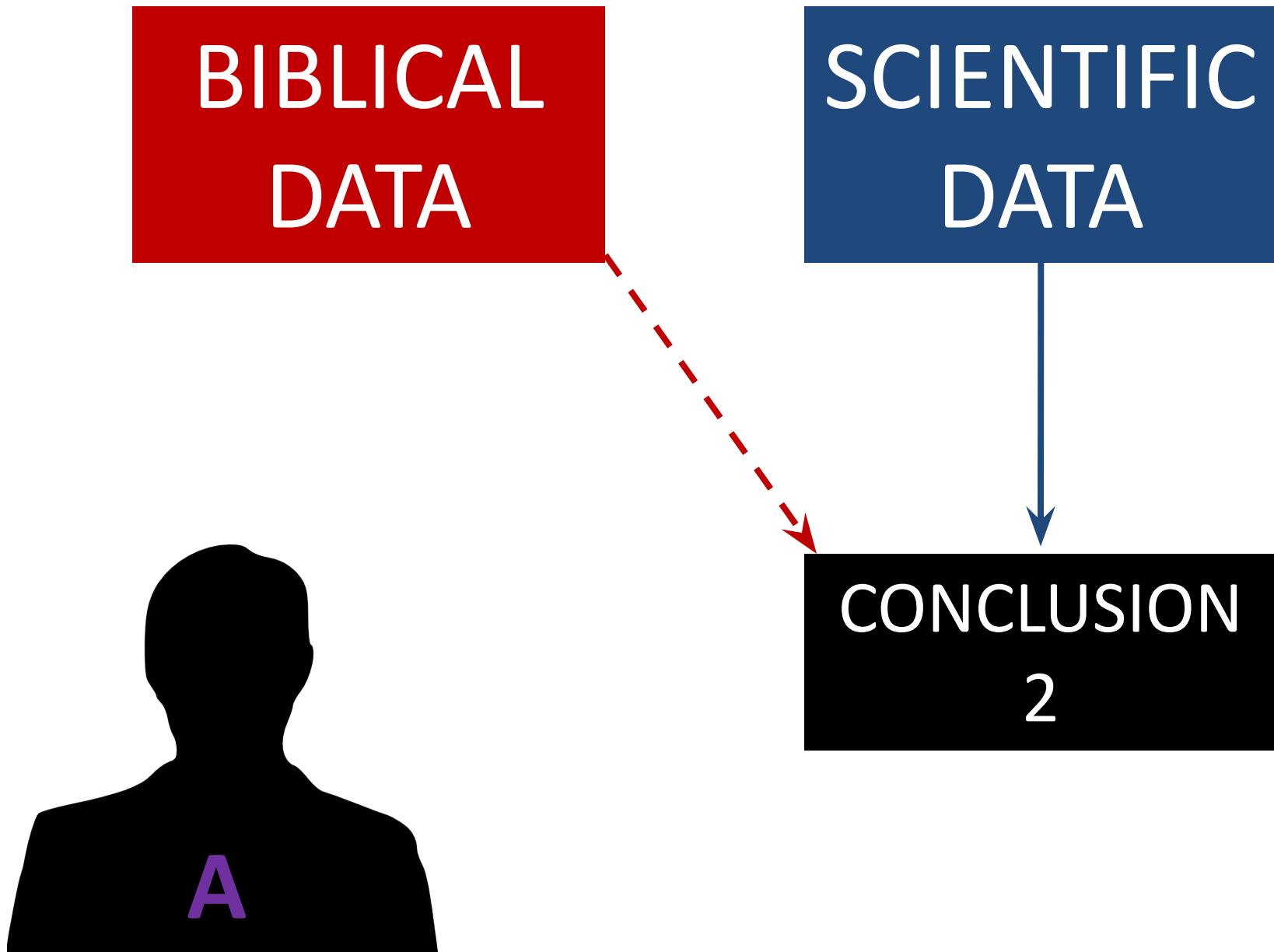
BIBLICAL
DATA

SCIENTIFIC
DATA

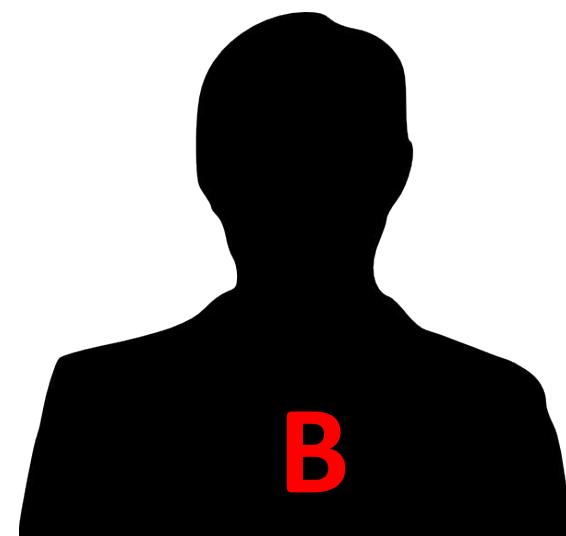
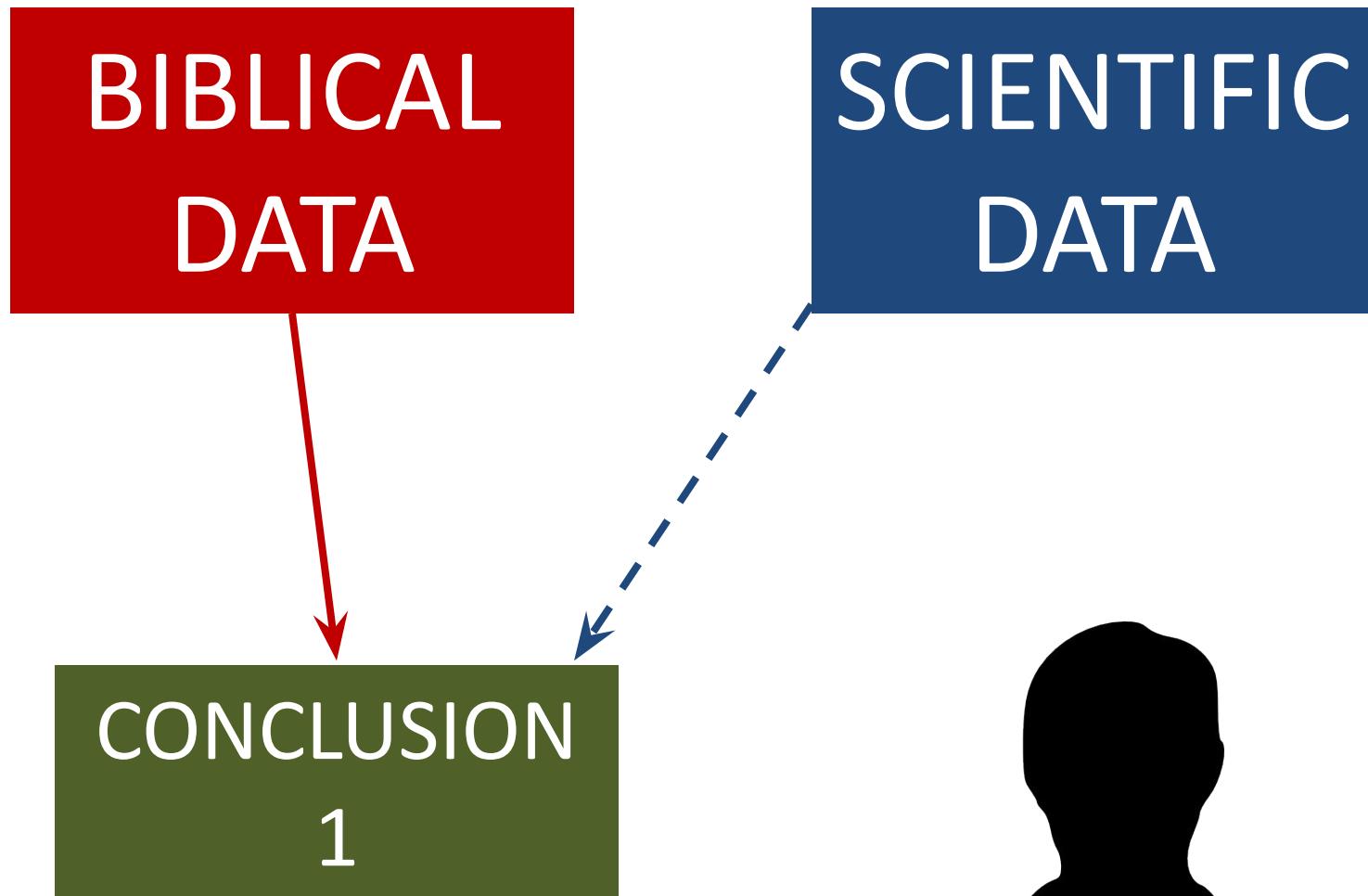
Apparent conflicts happen when....



A: Reinterpret Bible



B: Reinterpret Scientific Data



Are Christians A and B on the same side?

- They are both committed to Biblical and Scientific data; they only disagree on proper interpretations.



What do you do with apparent conflicts?

- “The Bible can handle any question you throw at it.”
- Trust the trustworthy, even as you struggle through the questions.

The Fundamental Conflict

- Scientism vs. Christianity
- Scientism says:
 - Scientific testing is the only path to reliable knowledge
 - Science only deals with the natural world (no supernatural)
 - “Naturalism”
 - Thus, natural world is all you can know about.
 - All other beliefs are non-objective.

Steven Pinker,
Harvard



A portrait of astrophysicist Neil deGrasse Tyson on the left, looking upwards with a thoughtful expression. The background is a vibrant, swirling nebula in shades of red, orange, yellow, and blue, filled with stars.

COSMOS

A SPACETIME ODYSSEY

With Astrophysicist and Host Neil deGrasse Tyson
and Executive Producer and Writer Ann Druyan

NATIONAL
GEOGRAPHIC
CHANNEL

What is Scientism?

(Empiricism, Positivism)

Only beliefs that can be proven through scientific experiments are trustworthy.



David Hume, 1711 – 1776

Only beliefs that can be proven through scientific experiments are trustworthy.

Can you prove that statement through scientific experiments?

- It's not that science proves the supernatural doesn't exist...
- It's that scientism assumes that anything outside the purview of science is unknowable

Where can you see this problem in action?

A Texas Tech Honors Student: “Science has proven that our minds are purely physical; there’s no such thing as a soul.”



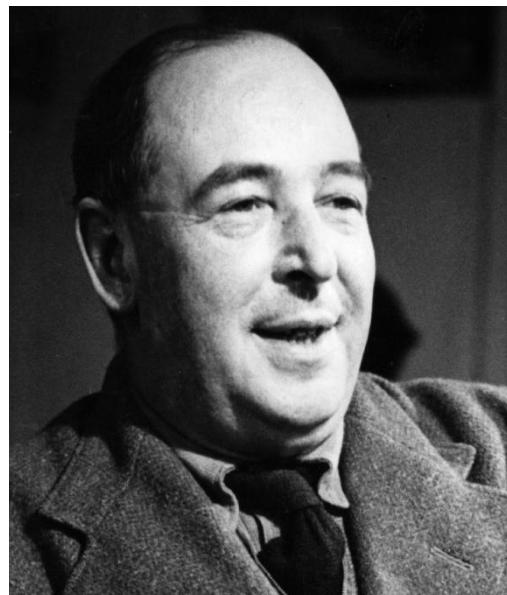
Does Science Disprove Miracles?

“Ancient people thought that miracles like a virgin birth were possible. Now, thanks to Science, we know it can’t happen.”



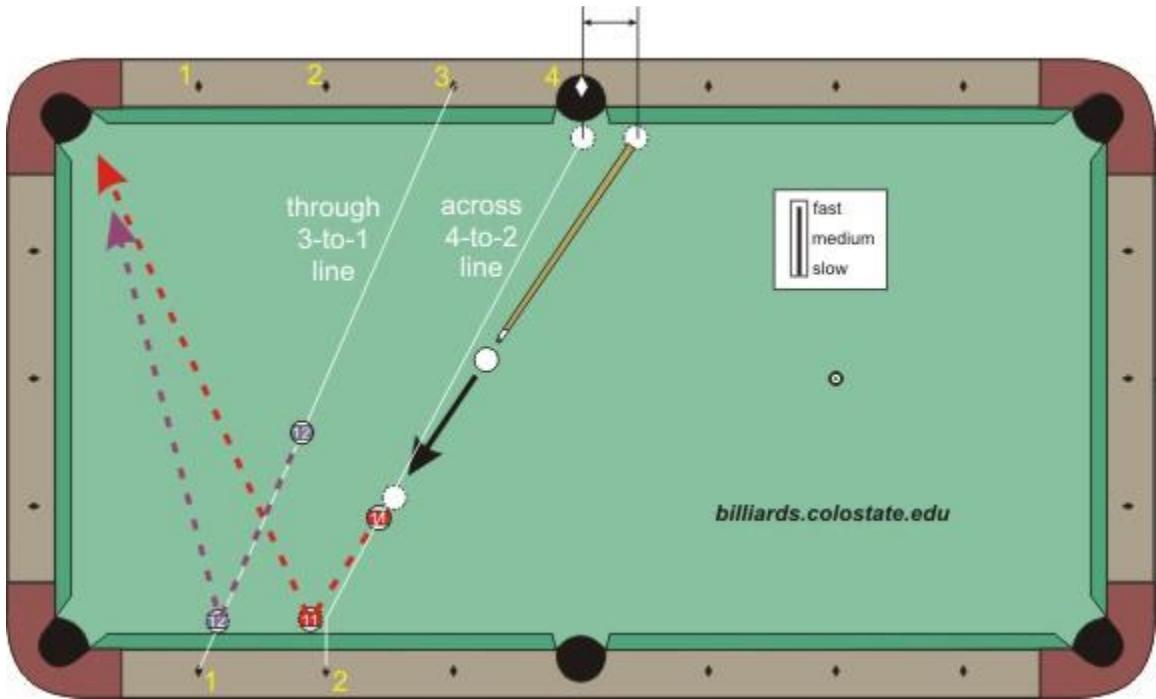
Miracles are not natural, they're supernatural

- Science deals with a description of the natural world; a miracle involves **MORE** than the natural world.



C. S. Lewis, 1898 –1963

- Example: Billiards

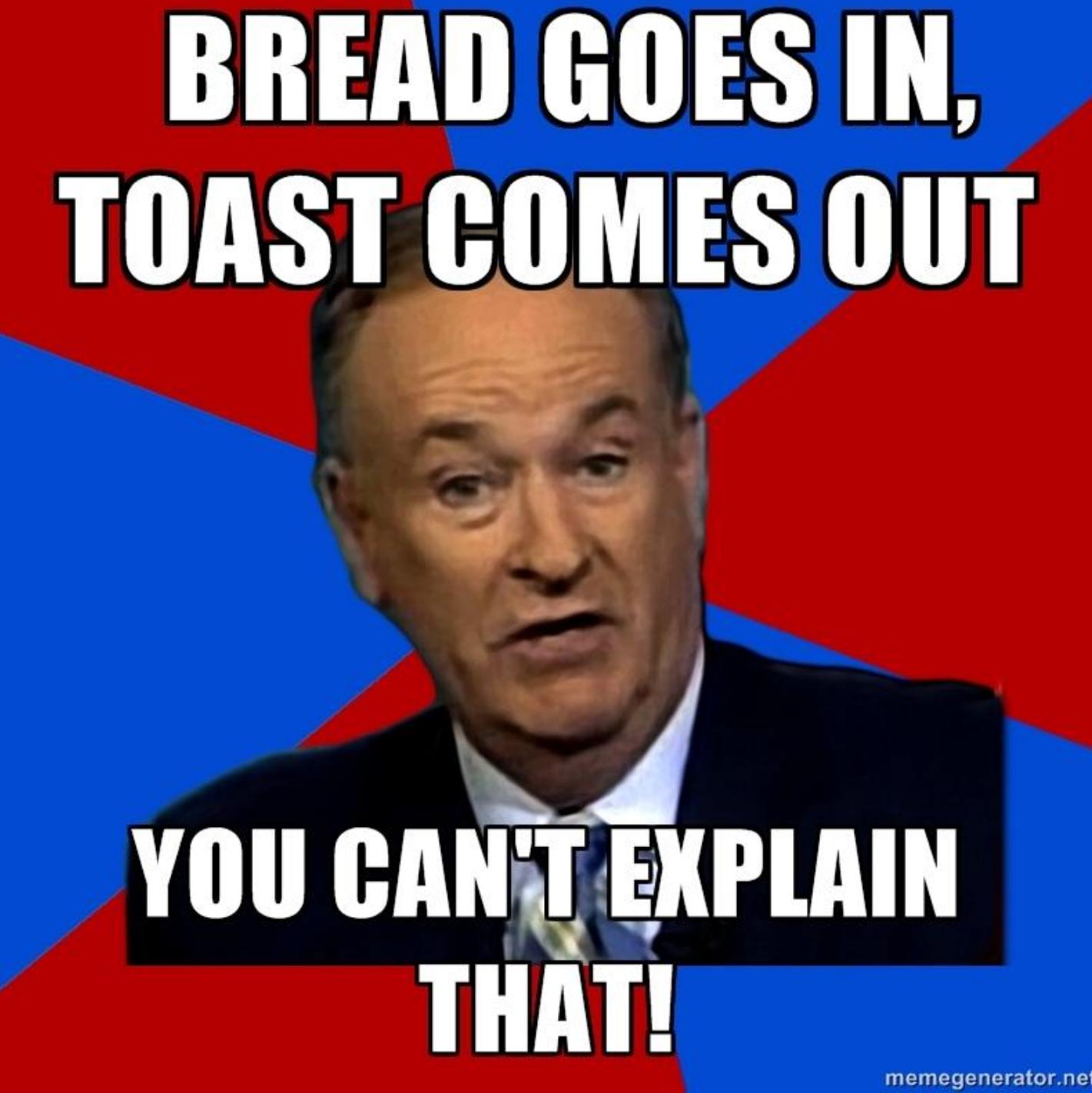


Does Science Support Belief in God?

Poor Approaches to Science & Christianity



**BREAD GOES IN,
TOAST COMES OUT**



**YOU CAN'T EXPLAIN
THAT!**

Does Science Support Belief in God?

Science can't prove God, but scientific findings can support premises in philosophical arguments.

The *Kalam* Cosmological Argument

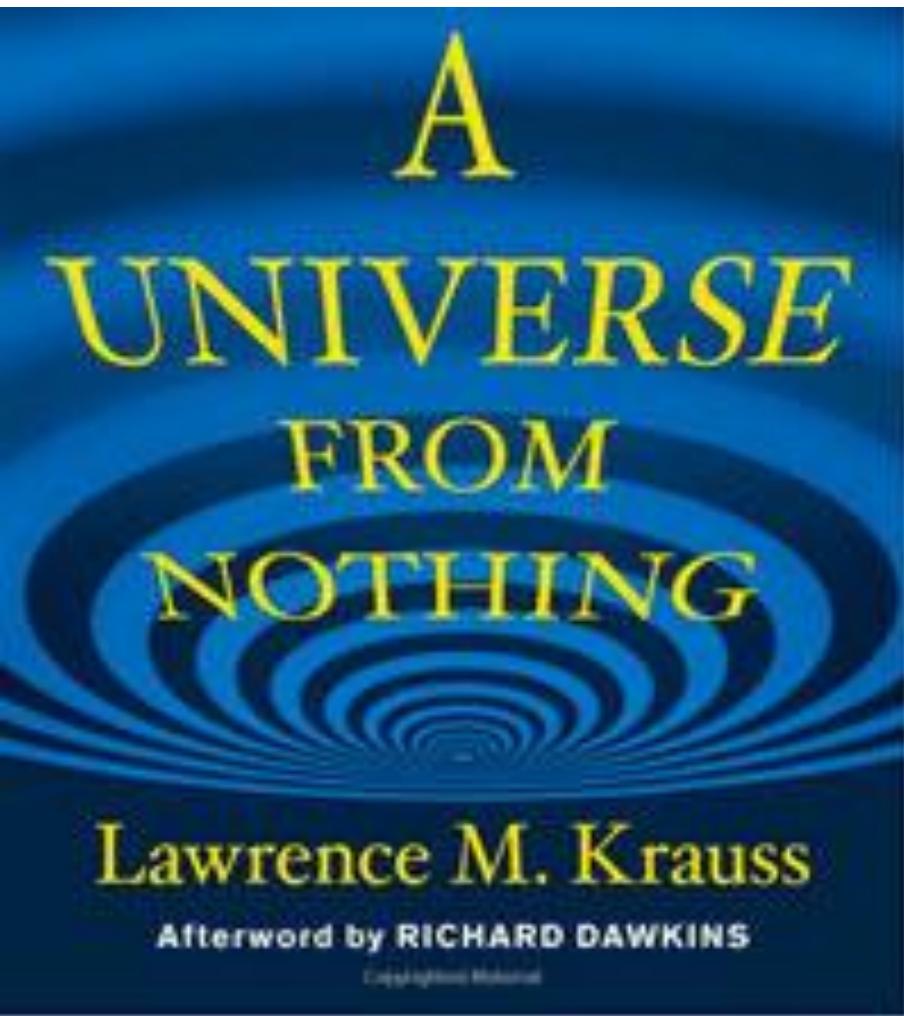
Premise 1: Whatever begins to exist has a cause

Can't create itself

Can't pop into existence from nothing

Premise 2: The universe began to exist.

Conclusion: Therefore, the universe has a cause



Krauss: The universe can come from nothing*”!

*and by nothing, I mean...a very small something.

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COMPARISON TOOL TO FIND THE PERFECT CAR.

Stephen Hawking: God didn't create universe

By Richard Allen Greene, CNN

September 2, 2010 3:41 p.m. EDT



Stephen Hawking argues that it's unremarkable that at least one planet has conditions for life.

STORY HIGHLIGHTS

LONDON, England (CNN) -- God did not create the universe, world famous physicist Stephen Hawking argues in a new book that

&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CCAQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.cnn.com%2F2010%2FWC



“Because there is a law such as gravity, the universe can and will create itself from nothing. Spontaneous creation is the reason there is something rather than nothing, why the universe exists, why we exist. It is not necessary to invoke God to light the blue touch paper and set the universe going.”

See the problem?

The Scientific Mind

Early 2003: My Existential Crisis

What are the
consequences if
naturalism is true?



Full-Blown Skepticism

- These conclusions are so awful, who would want to believe them?
- Is there an innate motivation for believing in the supernatural?
- **How did I come out of this?**

What changed my mind?



“For like a shaft, clear and cold, the thought pierced him that in the end the Shadow was only a small and passing thing: there was light and high beauty for ever beyond its reach.”

The trouble with skepticism

- Doesn't require any work or data
- “Universal acid” – applies to anything

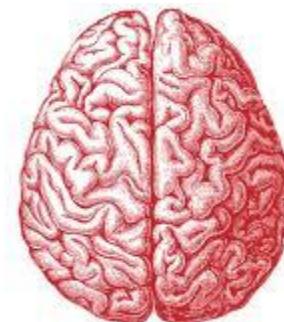


The Scientific Mind

- What kinds of assumptions do I need to make in order to be a scientist?
 - Sense perception is reliable
 - Universe is understandable and orderly
 - My mind is reliable
- Why do I get to make those assumptions?

If naturalism is true, then what about my mind?

- My “mind” is just the biochemical reactions going in my head
- Is my subjective, first-person conscious experience and sense of self actually real?
- Is my sense of rational, logical thought and argumentation legitimate?





IN MODERATE TO SEVERE RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS (RA)

Get an RA symptom profile
to show your doctor 



Prescription Enbrel® (etanercept) is taken by injection.

[Prescribing Information](#) [Medication Guide](#)

Important Safety Information

INDICATION

Moderate to Severe Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA)

ENBREL is indicated for reducing signs and symptoms.

The Brain: The Mystery of Consciousness

You exist, right? Prove it. How 100 billion jabbering neurons create the knowledge--or illusion--that you're here

By Steven Pinker | Monday, Jan. 29, 2007



The young women had survived the car crash, after a fashion. In the five months since parts of her brain had been crushed, she could open her eyes but didn't respond to sights, sounds or jabs. In the jargon of neurology, she was judged to be in a persistent vegetative state. In crueler everyday language, she was a vegetable.

So picture the astonishment of British and Belgian scientists as they scanned her brain using a kind of MRI that detects blood flow to active parts of the brain. When they recited sentences, the parts involved in language lit up. When they asked her to



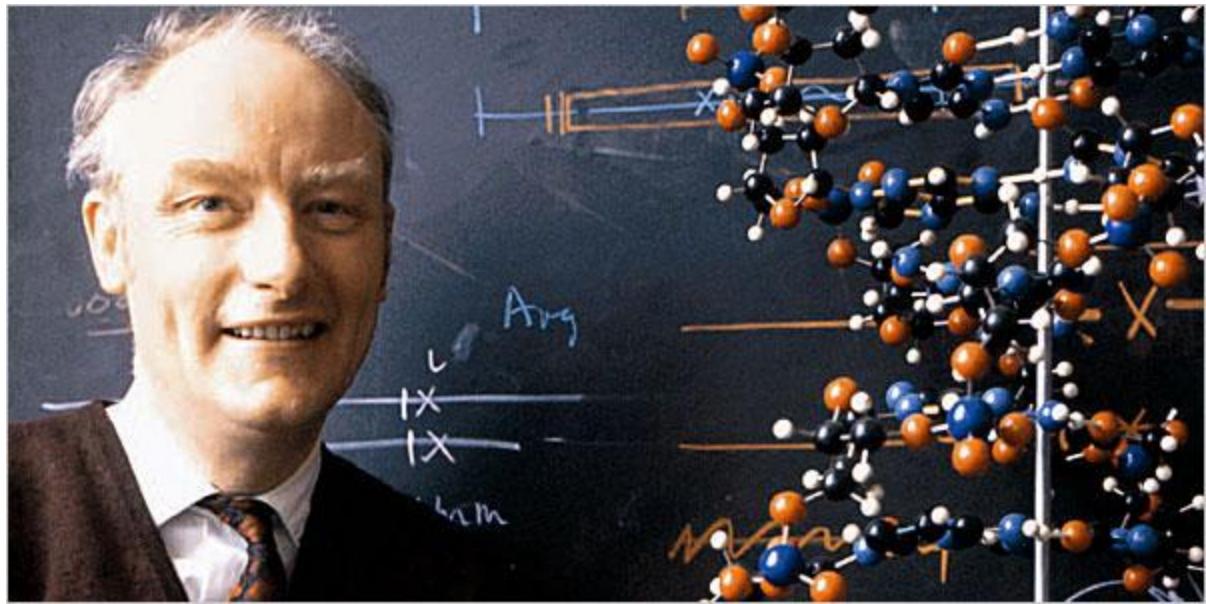
Illustration for TIME by Istvan Orosz

“Your joys and your sorrows, your memories and your ambitions, your sense of personal identity and free will, are in fact no more than the behavior of a vast assembly of nerve cells and their associated molecules.”

-Francis Crick

The Astonishing Hypothesis: The Scientific Search For The Soul

Reductionism

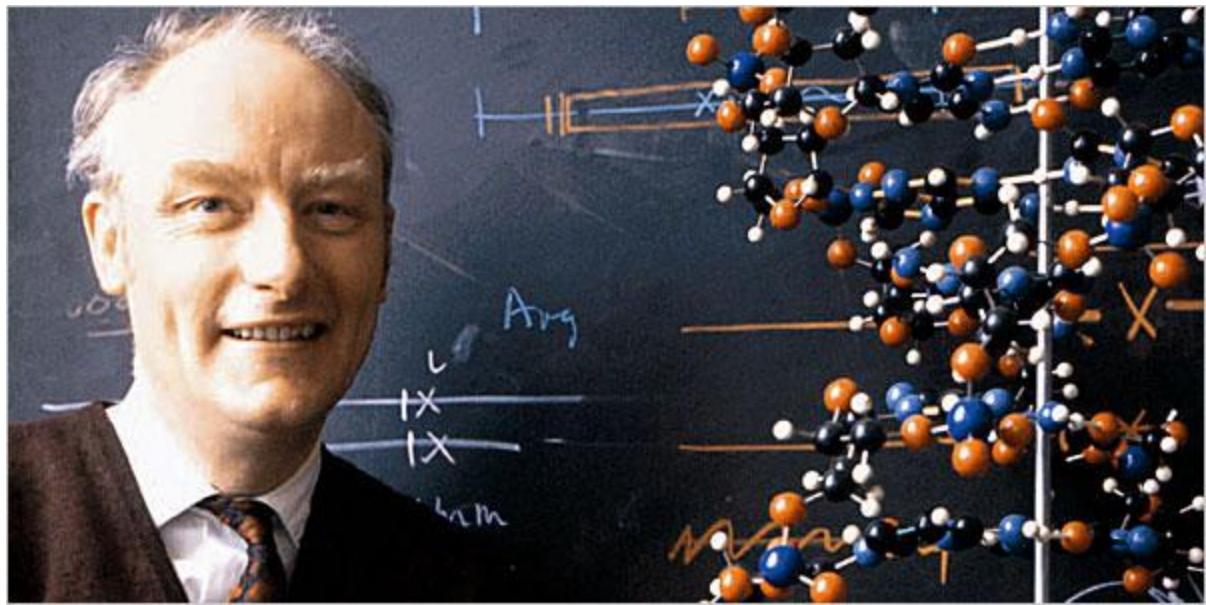


“My joys and my sorrows, my memories and my ambitions, my sense of personal identity and free will, are in fact no more than the behavior of a vast assembly of nerve cells and their associated molecules.”

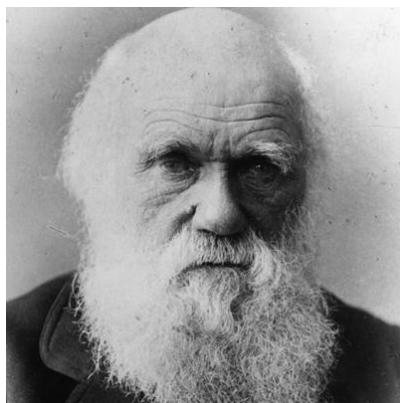
-Francis Crick

The Astonishing Hypothesis: The Scientific Search For The Soul

Reductionism



“With me the horrid doubt always arises whether the convictions of man’s mind, which has been developed from the mind of the lower animals, are of any value or at all trustworthy. Would any one trust in the convictions of a monkey’s mind, if there are any convictions in such a mind?”



Charles Darwin

Do we have to be Reductionist?

- Even if naturalism is true, perhaps consciousness (and rationality) is an **emergent** property that **supervenes** upon the neural network



What are the consequences of reductionism?

Beliefs come from natural selection, not from rational thought



“Religion has the hallmarks of an evolved behavior, meaning that it exists because it was favored by natural selection. It is universal because it was wired into our neural circuitry before the ancestral human population dispersed from its African homeland.”

Nicholas Wade, NYT

You have religious beliefs
because evolution
predisposed you to do so,
independent of any
rational reason.

Did evolution predispose
you to believe what you
just said, independent of
any rational reason?

The consequences of Naturalism

- No “should” statements
- No meaning
- **No cognitive reliability**
- **No first-person subjective experience**
- **No science?**

The Scientific Mind and Naturalism

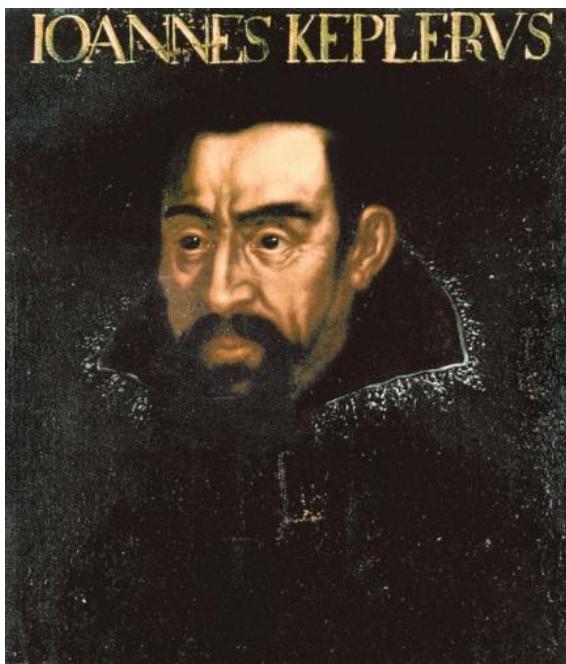
- What kinds of assumptions do I need to make in order to be a Scientist?
 - Sense perception is reliable
 - ~~Universe is understandable and orderly~~
 - ~~My mind is reliable~~

The Scientific Mind and Christianity

- What kinds of assumptions do I need to make in order to be a Scientist?
 - Sense perception is reliable
 - Universe is understandable and orderly because God made the universe
 - My mind is reliable because God made my mind!

Christianity: A solid foundation for science

“Those laws are within the grasp of the human mind. God wanted us to recognize them by creating us after his own image so that we could share in his own thoughts.”



- Johannes Kepler, 1571 – 1630

Does Faith Affect the Way We Do Science?



“The chief aim of all investigations of the external world should be to discover the rational order and harmony which has been imposed on it by God.”

-Johannes Kepler, 1571 – 1630



“The diversity of the phenomena of nature is so great, and the treasures hidden in the heavens so rich, precisely in order that the human mind shall never be lacking in fresh nourishment.”

Questions?

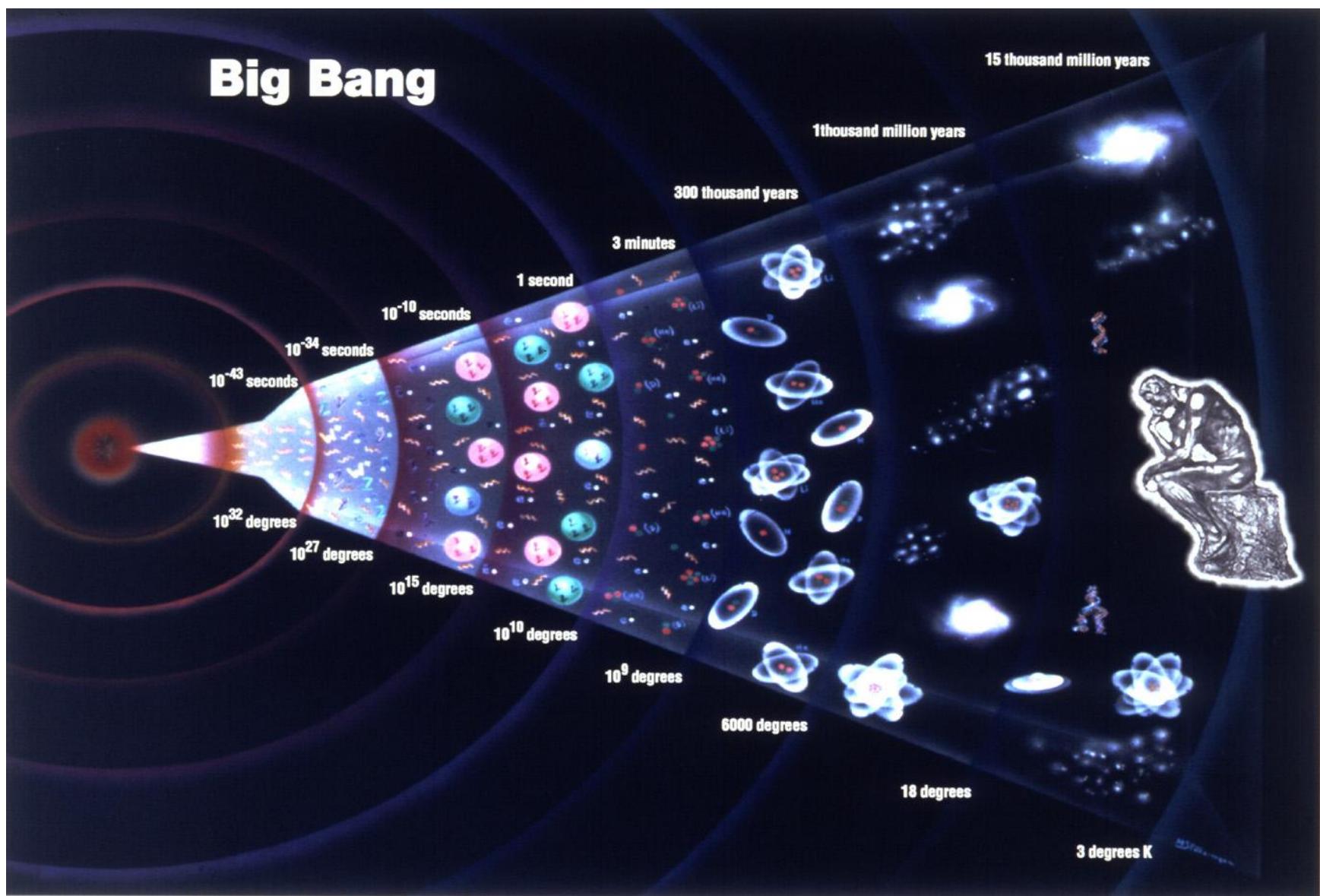
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Appendix

- The very idea of natural laws stems from the concept that the world is ruled by a rational lawgiver, just as it is a historical fact that modern science grew out of a worldview guided by biblical theism. One of the absurdities of [atheistic] materialism is that it assumes that the world can be rationally comprehensible only if it is entirely the product of irrational, unguided mechanisms. Another absurdity is that the scientific mind itself was designed by natural selection, a force that rewards only superiority at reproduction and by whose standards the mind of the cockroach is every bit as effective as the mind of Einstein.
- On the contrary, the rationality and reliability of the scientific mind rests on the fact that the mind was designed in the image of the mind of the Creator, who made both the laws and our capacity to understand them.
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-
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- --Phillip Johnson, *Signs of Intelligence: Understanding Intelligent Design*

Big Bang



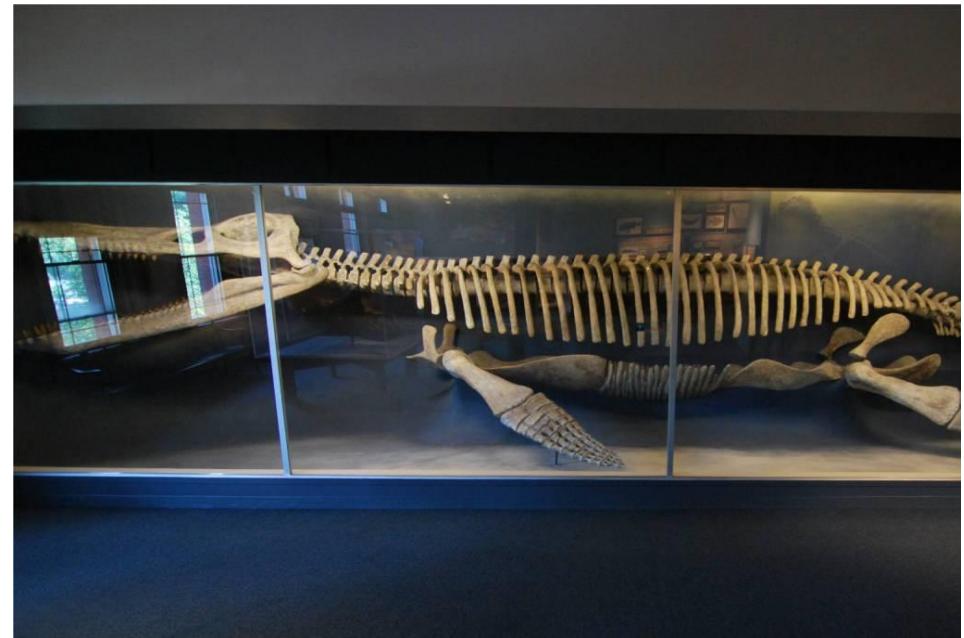
Scientism and Evidence

- No matter what evidence is presented, Scientism says “No Supernatural” because of a commitment to natural causes only



Where can you see this problem in action?

Harvard Museum of Natural History, Origin of Life Exhibit:



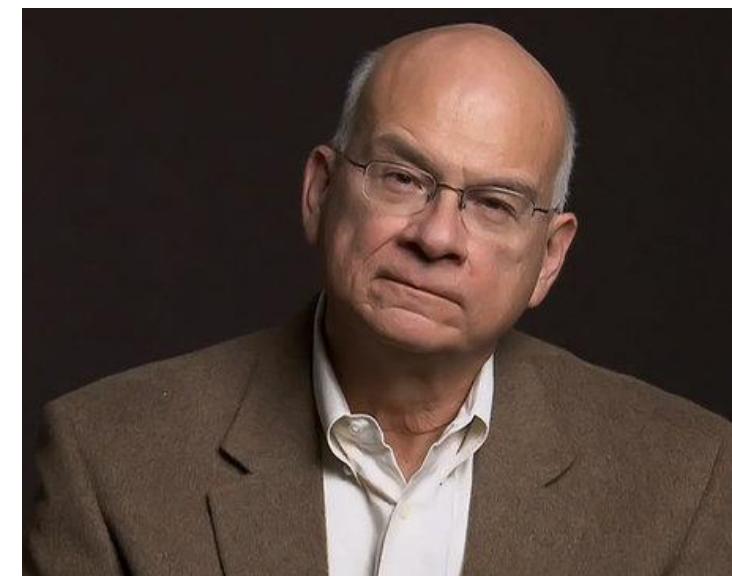


TOMBEAU DE SAINT-THOMAS D'AQUIN

Saint-Thomas d'Aquin, théologien italien, né à Roccasecca, près

I urge skeptics to wrestle with the unexamined “blind faith” on which skepticism is based, and to see how hard it is to justify those beliefs to those who do not share them. I also urge believers to wrestle with their personal and culture’s objections to the faith. At the end of each process, even if you remain the skeptic or believer you have been, you will hold your own position with both greater clarity and greater humility. Then there will be an understanding, sympathy, and respect for the other side that did not exist before. Believers and nonbelievers will rise to the level of disagreement rather than simply denouncing one another. This happens when each side has learned to represent the other’s argument in its strongest and most positive form.

- Tim Keller, *The Reason for God*

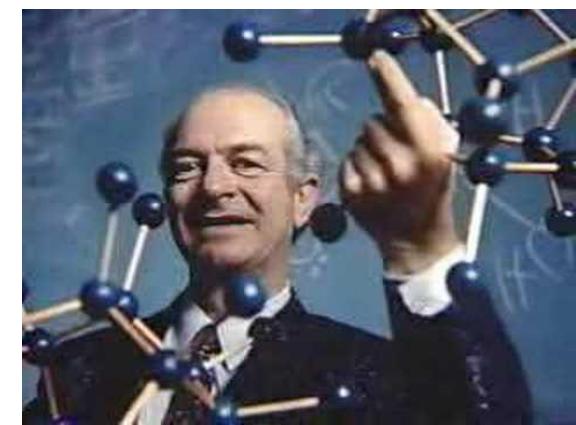


Purpose of this talk

- Not “Debate Ammunition”
- Understand where others are coming from
Create real conversation
- Help to break down stereotypes and create space for discussion of faith and science in public sphere.
- Take common points of discussion and turn them toward the gospel

Origin of Life (Teleological Argument)

- The more we learn about origin of life, the more impossible it seems
- Francis Crick (atheist):
 - “An honest man, armed with all the knowledge available to us now, could only state that in some sense, the origin of life appears at the moment to be almost a miracle, so many are the conditions which would have had to have been satisfied to get it going.”
 - Umm....maybe aliens did it?



Does Science Support Belief in God?

- Yes: Look for the places where scientific data makes atheists uncomfortable

Fine-Tuning Principle (Teleological Argument)

- Special properties of universe, solar system, and earth
 - If strong nuclear force were 2% stronger...
 - (30+ other examples like this:
<http://www.godandscience.org/apologetics/designun.html>)
- Atheist responses?
 - Multiverse
 - Normalization problem

